

2020

University of North Florida Environmental Center Annual Report 2020

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ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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A partnership with UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension provided students an opportunity to participate in building a demonstration living shoreline. Learn more about this and other community partnerships on page 9.



Serving the community has always been a priority for undergraduate Leanza Mayo. As a project leader, Mayo worked with Dr. Lauri Wright to collect and distribute food to those in need. Read more about Mayo on page 6.

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CREDITS

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year was a whirlwind of changes! We said our thanks and farewell to staff and leadership, reorganized and welcomed many new exciting opportunities, redesigned and developed many new programs, and then COVID-19 hit.

Here are just a few highlights from this year:

- **Reorganization and Leadership:** Just this year, I joined the Center as Interim Director in August 2019. Maria Mark left the University in spring 2020, James Taylor was promoted to Assistant Director, and Kelly Rhoden joined the Center as a Coordinator of Student Engagement and Professional Development in summer 2020. We are working together with renewed energy, ideas and activity and excited about the progress we've made in a short time.
- **Environmental Center Leadership Program (ECLP):** We re-developed the our Leadership Program. Our goal was to keep the success from the past, but to reach more students across the University and to make the program a merit-based scholarship program. This year, we had record number of UNF students apply and raised \$50,000 from generous donors: The Felburn Foundation and The Cummer Foundation. In March, we selected the top 26 students to represent our largest cohort of leadership students to date! The ECLP students represent five colleges at UNF and 17 different departments including international studies, biology, nutrition, engineering, business, communication and more. This inaugural cohort in our newly envisioned ECLP began the program in Fall 2020.
- **Environmental Studies Minor:** In October 2019, the Environmental Center assumed responsibility for the Environmental Studies minor. This is exciting news! Throughout the year, we worked with our Executive Board, faculty from each college, to redesign the interdisciplinary minor to provide a menu of sustainability and environmental-related courses that explore the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Students will benefit from a reinvigorated minor with dedicated support and focus from the Environmental Center.
- **UNF-KAO Honors Society:** We started a chapter of Kappa Alpha Omicron (KAO) honors society at UNF. The UNF-KAO Honors Society is associated with the national organization, Interdisciplinary Environmental Association, and ideal for students interested in environmental sciences and studies. The first cohort of the honors society will benefit in many ways: leadership and social engagement opportunities, professional development, getting involved in NE Florida through required service hours, international research and networking opportunities, as well as receiving honors cords and pins to display during graduation.
- **Research:** We also continued to support environmental-related faculty research across all colleges through our grants funded by our generous donors, the River Branch Foundation and Vulcan Materials. In addition, we were involved in the development of several funded research proposal to solve environmental problems, such as NOAA's Marine Debris Reduction Program.



Despite the changes and challenges, we laid the foundation for exciting new programming for UNF students, faculty and community partners! And there is tremendous potential ahead as we expand opportunities for our students, faculty and community partners!

Erin Largo-Wight, Ph.D.
Director, Environmental Center
Professor, Department of Public Health

MEET THE TEAM



Erin Largo-Wight, Ph.D.
Director, Environmental Center
Faculty, Public Health



James W. Taylor
Assistant Director



Kelly Rhoden
Coordinator - *Started June 2020*



Maria D. Mark
Coordinator - *Retired March 2020*

STUDENT STAFF



Taia Harris
Communication - Advertising



Shannon Latimer
International Studies

FACULTY BOARD



Christopher Baynard, Ph.D.
Department of Economics and Geography
Coggin College of Business



Charles Closmann, Ph.D.
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College of Arts and Sciences



Raphael Crowley, Ph.D.
Taylor Engineering Research Institute
College of Computing, Engineering and
Construction



Katrina Hall, Ph.D.
Department Childhood Education,
Literacy and TESOL
College of Education and Human Services



J. David Lambert, Ph.D.
Department of Economics and Geography
Coggin College of Business

FACULTY FELLOWS

College of Arts and Sciences

Josh Gellers, Ph.D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Enrijeta Shino, Ph.D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Heather Barnes Truelove, Ph.D., Department of Psychology
Joseph Butler, Ph.D., Department of Biology
Kelly Smith, Ph.D., Department of Biology
Adam Rosenblatt, Ph.D., Department of Biology
Anthony Rossi, Ph.D., Department of Biology

Brooks College of Health

Amber Barnes, Ph.D., Department of Public Health

College of Computing, Engineering and Construction

Christopher Brown, Ph.D., School of Engineering
Stephen Stagon, Ph.D., School of Engineering

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Each academic year the Environmental Center works with hundreds of outstanding students from a wide range of disciplines. These students are not only academically talented, but also have a passion for making a positive impact in the community. This section highlights one of those outstanding students.

Serving the community has always been a priority for undergraduate Leanza Mayo. Throughout Mayo's tenure at UNF, she accumulated nearly 1,000 service hours, while excelling in a rigorous and competitive academic program.

After graduating high school, Mayo participated in the Rotary Youth Exchange — an exchange program under the auspices of Rotary International. Through this program she volunteered for a year of service in the Czech Republic, where she attended high school, learned the local language and immersed herself in the culture. Mayo has continued her involvement with Rotary and Rotary Youth Exchange as a member of the Rotary Club of St. Augustine, and received the Rising Star Award in 2018.

Mayo continued her commitment to service while attending classes at UNF. During her studies, Mayo volunteered with UNF's Ogier gardens, Lend-A-Wing Pantry, Meals on Wings and Food Fighters. It was while volunteering for Food Fighters that Mayo was introduced to the Environmental Leadership Program.

She applied to be a project leader for the 2019-20 academic year. As Volunteer Coordinator, Mayo managed 30+ volunteers and coordinated with community organizations to get meals to food-insecure populations in the Jacksonville area, for example Northeast Florida AIDS Network and Lutheran Social Services.

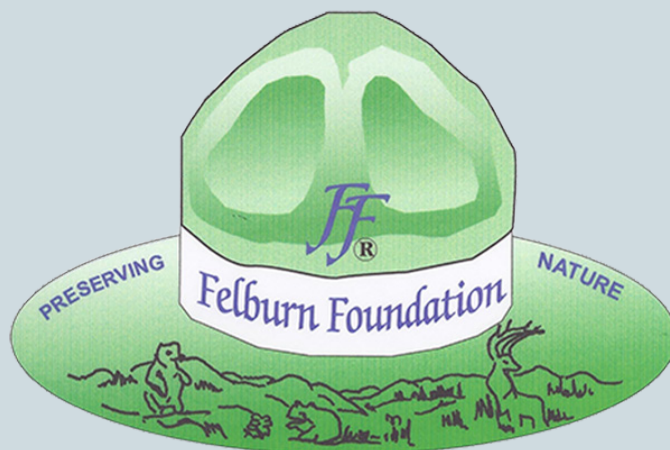
In recognition of her continued service and dedication to the community, she was awarded the UNF Alumni Association Senior Service Award in Spring 2020. Mayo graduated in 2020, and UNF is proud and honored to welcome her to the Osprey alumni family.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

The Environmental Center would not be able to accomplish its mission without the generosity of donors. The gifts provided by foundations and individual donors provide support for environmental research and programs that train the next generation of environmental leaders. This section highlights the Felburn Foundation, one of our outstanding donors.

The Felburn Foundation was founded in 1978 with the mission “to promote the preservation of natural lands and waters, biodiversity, education and quality of life.” The Foundation was founded and endowed by J. Phil Felburn, a businessman and philanthropist, who believed preservation and protection of our natural heritage is a mandate. The Foundation was later run by his daughter, Ellie Schiller, until her death.



Current projects supported by the Felburn Foundation focus on land preservation, state parks, museums, archaeology, paleontology, support of land trusts, rain forests and education. One of the most prominent projects supported by the Felburn Foundation is the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center, which is located within the Silver Springs State Park. The project was started by Guy Marwick, the current executive director of the Felburn Foundation, after receiving a Christa McAuliffe Scholarship in 1987. Through a partnership with the Marion County Public School system, approximately 10,000 students visit the natural history museum and Silver River annually.

The Felburn Foundation currently provides support for the Environmental Center Leadership Program. When asked why the Foundation supports the ECLP, Marwick responded that “We feel it’s extremely important to support UNF’s Environmental Center, as the Center is developing leaders for our future who will need to be armed with knowledge and expertise to fight for our Earth. If we don’t get ahead of some of the environmental issues we are facing, we are going to have a very different world. UNF has a great program.”

SUPPORT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

All Environmental Center programs are funded through external gifts and grants. Please consider supporting the Environmental Center by making a gift today. Your contribution will help provide students with beneficial opportunities and support faculty research related to the environment.

Visit www.unf.edu/ecenter to make a gift today, or contact Sr. Director of Development for Academic Affairs Kathleen Leone at k.leone@unf.edu or 904-620-1838 for more information.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Partners

City of Jacksonville, Environmental
Protection Board

Duval Audubon Society

Florida Native Plant Society, Ixia
Chapter

Florida Springs Institute

Florida State Parks

Groundwork Jacksonville

Jacksonville University Marine Science
and Research Institute

Keep Jacksonville Beautiful

National Park Service

Northeast Florida Master Naturalists

North Florida Land Trust

Sierra Club Northeast Florida Group

St. Johns Riverkeeper

Timucuan Parks Foundation

UF/IFAS Nassau County

U.S. Green Building Council Florida



TIMUCUAN
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Your Parks' Best Friend

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Working with community partners to offer educational programming for the campus community as well as the general public. These programs aim to connect different groups within the community to learn about relevant issues.

Jacksonville Environmental Symposium

Partner: City of Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board

The annual symposium is hosted at the UNF Adam W. Herbert University Center and features the release of the State of the River Report for the Lower St. Johns River Basin, breakout sessions on various topics and a keynote speaker.

Sierra Club Educational Programs

Partner: Sierra Club Northeast Florida

The Northeast Florida Sierra Club group hosts educational monthly programs designed to create dialogue about environmental issues. This partnership brought the Sierra Club programs to campus, providing students an opportunity to learn and get engaged in the community.

Sustainability and Resiliency Outreach

Partner: U.S. Green Building Council

The Environmental Center partnered with USGBC Florida to help implement community educational programs, including screening a series of sustainability-themed documentaries and the development of a mobile educational unit called Sustainability Materials and Resources Trailer (LiveSMART).

Living Shoreline Demonstration Project

Partner: UF/IFAS Nassau County

Living shorelines can be an effective way to protect shorelines and restore critical habitat. The Environmental Center worked with UF/IFAS Nassau County to deploy “reef balls” at a city park. The deployment is part of a demonstration project that integrates different restoration options.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

The Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) was created to provide a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to complete a community-based project while further developing professional and personal skills. In its first three years, 34 students participated in ELP. In an effort to expand its impact, the program was redesigned during the 2019-20 academic year, and only three students were accepted during this transition year.



STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Through the generous support of donors, the Environmental Center is able to provide financial support to students accepted into the ELP. The funds help reduce the cost of attendance and reduce the need for students to work off campus.

Each student accepted into the program will earn approximately \$2,500 while completing leadership training and implementing a community-based project.



GOOD THINGS ARE COMING SOON

The Environmental Leadership Program was launched in 2016 with the goal of training the next generation of environmental leaders. While the program has been successful, several changes are being implemented to increase student participation and community impact.

The newly redesigned program was implemented for the 2020 fall semester and includes the largest and most academically accomplished group to date! Participating students represent five UNF colleges and have an average GPA of 3.6. We are excited to share the accomplishments of this cohort in next year's annual report.

PROJECT LEADERS

Project leaders are selected based on their passion and commitment to solving environmental and social justice issues. They are undergraduate students representing five UNF college, and they must have demonstrated leadership experience.



Anna Crum

Nutrition & Dietetics

Anna Crum wanted to be an ELP Project Leader because she wanted to make a difference. Being a Project Leader for Food Fighters allowed her to make a difference with both student volunteers and with those who are food insecure. Crum said the opportunity has been a life-changing experience.



Kali Massa

Nutrition & Dietetics

Kali Massa began volunteering with Food Fighters during the Spring 2019 semester and quickly fell in love with the project. Massa also said that nothing brings her more joy than helping others, and this program provides well-balanced meals to those in need within our community.



Leanza Mayo

Nutrition & Dietetics

Leanza Mayo was introduced to Food Fighters and the ELP during her junior year, and she immediately knew she wanted to be a Project Leader. Not only did she enjoy providing meals to those in need, but she also wanted to encourage others to volunteer and participate in making a positive impact.

ACADEMICS

Enhancing the academic experience for students is a central mission of the Environmental Center. Staff actively collaborate with faculty and community partners to create unique high-impact learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. Partnerships come from a range of academic disciplines, including biology, history, public health and others. The Environmental Center is increasingly the center of interdisciplinary environmental studies.



PRE[SERVE] ART EXHIBITION

Every year the Environmental Center partners with the Department of Art and Design to host an art exhibition focused on the Sawmill Slough Preserve. The call to artists was successful with almost 100 submissions from student and alumni. The exhibition planning committee selected 33 works from 25 different artists for display at the exhibition.

The exhibition opening was planned for March 2019 but was impacted by COVID-19. The exhibition is scheduled to be on display in the Lufrano Intercultural Gallery during the Fall 2020 semester.



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MINOR

Beginning in Spring 2020, the Environmental Center will take a leadership role in managing the Environmental Studies minor. The interdisciplinary minor is open to all students and offers an opportunity to explore courses from five UNF colleges that focus on the environment and sustainability.

The Environmental Center staff will continue to collaborate with faculty and community partners to provide unique learning opportunities for students enrolled in the minor.

REMOTE INTERNSHIPS

The changes brought about by COVID-19 made traditional internships difficult, but the Environmental Center responded to the challenge by creating a remote internship. The flexible internship allows students to further develop skills and expand their professional network while working remotely.



Thyanna Tran
Health Science



Justin Palmer
Health Science



Jacob Moudy
Public Health



Anna McDaniel
Health Science



Elyse Brockman
Health Science



Savanna Olgivie
Health Science

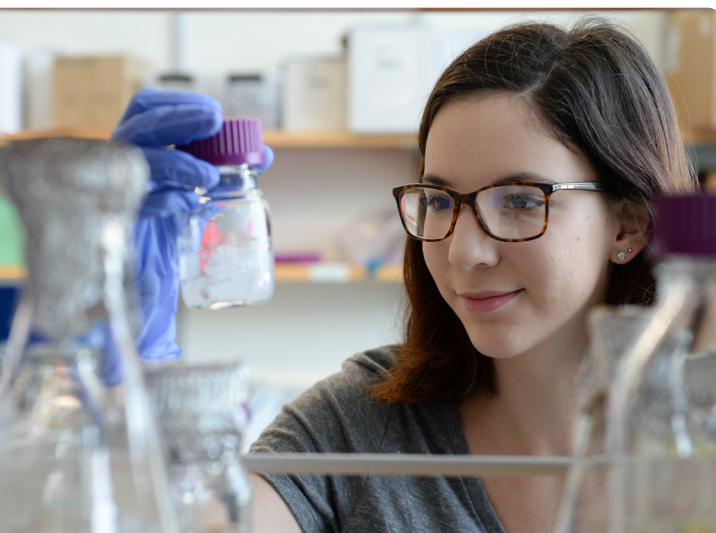
PROVIDING REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Internships provide students an opportunity to gain professional experience working on real-world problems. Those offered through the Environmental Center are designed to further develop hard skills using industry standard software such as ArcGIS, Adobe Creative Cloud, WordPress, Canva and more.

The internships also encourage continued personal and professional growth, through discussion of career goals. Additionally, interns are required to expand their professional network by speaking with professionals in their field of interest.

RESEARCH

Supporting the development of environmental research has been a top priority for the Environmental Center since its founding in 2004. Research support is provided to faculty in many ways. Seed Grants are offered to faculty annually in an effort to stimulate interdisciplinary research. Additionally, the Environmental Center helps facilitate community-based collaborations and provides faculty with technical and administrative support.



STUDENT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Providing research support for faculty also creates opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to contribute to faculty-led research. Participating in research provides students an opportunity to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting and further develop analytical skills. These experiences ultimately help prepare students for success in graduate school or careers.



DONOR SUPPORTED RESEARCH

Funding for the Seed Grant program comes from the support of private donations. The River Branch Foundation established an endowment in 2006, and proceeds are used to support faculty research. More recently, the Vulcan Materials Company Foundation has provided annual gifts that allow for additional research support.

These gifts provide critical support to faculty and allow for the purchase of supplies and equipment, support related travel and provide paid research opportunities for students.

SEED GRANTS

Seed Grants are intended to stimulate the creation of multidisciplinary research projects related to the environment that subsequently result in the submission of a proposal to an external funding agency. Since 2006, Seed Grants have provided support to 105 faculty members representing five UNF colleges.

Water and Disease in Florida: A Look Back as a Way Forward

Dr. Amber N. Barnes, Department of Public Health

Simulation and Assessment of Extreme Storm Events for Four Watersheds in the Lower St. Johns River, Florida USA

Dr. Christopher J. Brown, School of Engineering

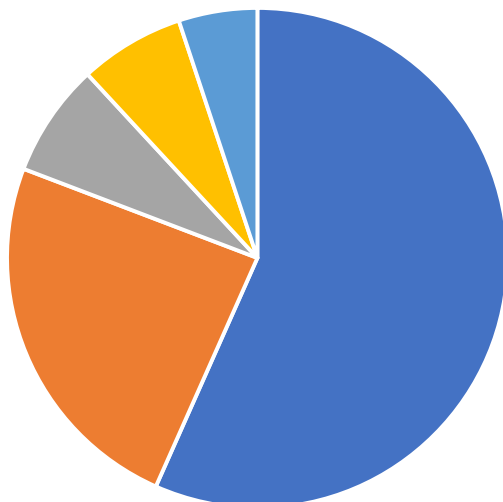
Ms. Samantha Kovalenko, Graduate Student, School of Engineering

Public Opinion on Climate Change: Assessing the Impact of Personal Experience

Dr. Josh Gellers, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Dr. Enrijeta Shino, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Dr. Heather Barnes Truelove, Department of Psychology



TOTAL SEED GRANT FUNDING BY COLLEGE

- College of Arts and Sciences - \$131,462
- College of Computing, Engineering and Construction - \$40,046
- College of Education and Human Services - \$17,000
- Coggin College of Business - \$15,750
- Brooks College of Health - \$11,800

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